

in Europe due to apprehensions in England and Germany would be greatly appeased, and this would be of more value to the peace of the world than any entente based on the settlement of territorial or commercial questions." In the decisive conversation with Hardinge on August 1908, the Kaiser sharply declared that modification of his ship-building programme was impossible, and that discussion of a question involving national honour could not be allowed. This brief interview was a turning-point in the history of British diplomacy. During his first two years of office, Grey's main anxiety arose from the strained relations between Paris and Berlin. From 1908 onwards the storm-centre shifted from the Eastern frontier of France to the North Sea. Once again the old cry rang through the land: "Look to your moat."

The naval scare of the spring of 1909 followed, based on rumours of stealthy German acceleration, and in the summer of the same year Bethmann Hollweg succeeded Billow as Chancellor. His first step was to declare his readiness for a "naval arrangement as part of a general understanding. His sincerity was manifest, but the coupling of a naval agreement with a political formula ruined the scheme. "To do with Germany what has not been done with Russia and France," wrote Grey to Goschen, "would look as if we were intending to change friends. I want a good understanding with Germany, but it must be one which will not imperil those we have with France and Russia. I should have thought some formula could be found to which they might also be parties. That would be the best and the most reassuring solution, though I see that the French could not be a party to anything which looked like confirming the loss of Alsace-

Lorraine." From
this standpoint he never moved during the three
years of
negotiation which lay ahead. While the Germans
asked for a
neutrality formula, we invited them to reduce
their ship-
building programme and offered nothing beyond
a promise of
non-aggression. Interrupted for several
months by the
Agadir crisis in 1911, the discussion was
resumed during the
Haldane mission to Berlin in February, 1912, and
continued
after his return. The old obstacles proved
insurmountable,
for each side asked more than the other was
prepared to grant.
Both the British appeal of 1908 and the German
approach of
1909 had failed.

Only once did Grey attempt a
comprehensive and con-

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